

Contemplation. Compassion. Creativity.

The Sacred Trinity of Possibility

A Professional Project

presented to

the Faculty of

Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Candice Jardine Bist

May 2018

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This professional project completed by

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has been presented to and accepted by the
faculty of Claremont School of Theology in
partial fulfillment of the requirements of the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Abstract

The thesis concerns itself with Western culture in the early part of the third century. It regards this time in history as one concerned with a shifting human consciousness, wherein humanity is beginning to understand itself as intrinsically connected to all people, all sentient beings, and all natural elements of the universe. It proposes that this shift in consciousness requires human co-operation to be fully realized. As such, the thesis offers a lens as guide during this time of realignment. This new viewing proposes that humanity begin in a place of contemplation, setting aside what it claims as certitude, for an exploration of what has not yet been revealed. Alongside the discipline of contemplation, comes the intentional spiritual discipline of compassion as an active engagement with others, and within oneself. When these two practises work together, an original creativity may emerge to offer solutions not yet imagined. These solutions are always in service to the greater good, providing portals through which grace may flow. Reflecting its core beliefs, the thesis is presented in the form of a digital anchorhold, a modern version of an ancient monastic tradition. Embracing its creative intent, the thesis is offered not only in word, but in song, story, poem and art, releasing its gifts to be offered freely to the world. Additionally, the digital anchorhold, in its ongoing existence, will offer a curated collection of works from a variety of disciplines, artists, scholars and writers that reflect the proposed sacred trinity of contemplation, compassion, and creativity.

In all the history now known,
there has never been a period in which souls
have been in such peril as they are today in every part of the globe...
We are living in times that have no precedent...
Today it is not nearly enough to be a saint.
We need the saintliness demanded by the present moment,
a new saintliness, itself also without precedent.
This new type of sanctity would be a fresh spring, an invention
...almost equivalent to a new revelation...
This is the thing we have to ask for now;
and we have to ask for it as a famished child asks for bread.
The world needs saints who have genius...
— Simone Weil

We can't solve problems
by using the same level of consciousness
and same kind of thinking
we used when we created them.
—Albert Einstein

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Introduction

Context of Thesis and Its Writer

I am an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church of Canada and a Spiritual Director trained in the Ignatian tradition. My training at Knox College, Toronto School of Theology, is from the Reform school of thought. My training at Regis College, TST, is from the Jesuit tradition. My studies at Claremont School of Theology are grounded in the United Methodist Church, embracing all faith traditions and all those wishing to pursue the way of peace and justice for, and with, others. I currently serve two United Church of Canada congregations in southern Ontario, one located in a rural setting and the other in a small, but growing town community in the Township of Mulmur, two hours north east of Toronto, Ontario. The Niagara Escarpment, a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve, runs through the area. The land upon which I live and work is known to the aboriginal people of Canada as Kennekota, meaning where the water comes from the earth. It is all under the Gayanashagowa, or the Great Law of the Peace of Jaudenosaunee Six Nations, which is the oral constitution whereby the Iroquois or Haudenosaunee, were bound together.

My perspective is shaped by being born and raised in twentieth century North America and currently living in Canada in the twenty-first century. It is also influenced by the colour of my skin, white, my social economic background, middle class, and my coming into womanhood in the early days of the women's movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since 2001, I have worked in rural ministry serving parish churches or worked at large with various community initiatives that wished to work outside the tidy borders of the institutional church, but still desired to offer compassionate caring to the community. My life experience is eclectic, both

theologically and intellectually. I was raised in a nominally Christian home that was artistic in nature, valued the acquiring of knowledge and was spiritually welcoming to all people.

The Problem the Thesis Wishes to Address

Humanity currently stands at a cross-road, unsure of the way forward, yet equally unsure of what is to be held true from the past. There is a collective loss of identity, loss of divine connection, and loss of imagination in the everyday living out of life. The mega narrative of the modern period wherein humanity held the certitude that science and technology would solve all difficulties, has been shattered. So too, the illusion that self-knowledge would encourage peaceful solutions to override conflict, lies in tatters. Seemingly endless amounts of information stream to people across the globe and still humanity continues to perpetuate atrocities in the name of war, increase the economic gap between prosperity and poverty, and disregard the growing body of evidence concerning the planet's ecological frailty.

Within my own personal experience, working as a minister and spiritual director in rural southern Ontario, the white homogeneous demographic is facing a rapidly changing structure, and with it, racially based violence threatens to erupt. The local town where one of the churches I serve is located, has the highest level of poverty in Dufferin County, a large county located in an area of rich farmland north west of the seemingly prosperous city of Toronto. Where I live and work there is an alarming increase in addiction and mental illness of all forms. Home life for ordinary people is often fractious, chaotic and fraught with uncertainty and fear. Too many young men have lost their sense of place in society. Suicides are all too frequent. Hopelessness and despair is rampant. And yet, paradoxically, there is a frantic construction industry erecting hastily built new homes, local banks are eager to lend money, and a plethora of government programs are being created to 'fix the problems.' But ultimately, no matter the good intentions

behind these various initiatives, the solutions that are offered contain little of real value, for they are created within the same post-modern mind set, and within the same parameters, in which the problems were created.

People individually, and humanity collectively, have lost their sense of identity, their relationship to the divine, and their sense of relationship to one another and to the natural world. As a result, decision-making lacks wisdom and true creativity is grinding to a halt. Humanity is currently struggling to negotiate its way through the complicated labyrinth of the everyday without any guiding principles that are sustainable. We have become homeless for the most part, disengaged with one another, and disconnected from our earthly home. We are stumbling. The way forward is unclear.

It is unknown because throughout human history we have seen ourselves as separate from one another in a competitive world structure that places one person's well-being separately from another's. It is unknown because our understandings of the divine are in shift and our allegiance to religious doctrine is faltering as important questions are being asked of those in authority. It is unknown because the worldview that upheld the modern era no longer reflects our everyday experience, leaving individuals with an uncertain understanding of their very essence. And yet, this thesis would posit that humanity is spiritually hungry for a new way forward, a new way to connect with our own humanity, and with that of others. And there is a way forward.¹

¹ Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2006), 27. Rohr in his introduction to *Contemplation in Action* suggests that between the traditional polarity of conservative and liberal thinking there is a third way forward. He writes: "There is a third way, and it probably is a way of 'kneeling.' Most people would just call it 'wisdom,' which is always distinguished from mere intelligence. It demands a transformation of consciousness and a move beyond the dualistic win/lose mind. Religion has always said that an authentic God encounter is the quickest and truest path to such wisdom. . . The slow but steady path of contemplative practice can lead us here."

If we are to move into a new paradigm, into a new human consciousness where we understand ourselves to be connected to one another in a deep, integrated way, we must learn not only how to think in a new way, but how to *be* in a new way. Humanity requires a new collective consciousness, and only humans, in collaboration with the mystery of the unknown, can bring this about.²

Research Questions

But how will we do this when we have thousands of years of living in a hierarchal, combative way? How will we do this when many religious people have interpreted God as a construct unique to our own doctrine and practice and those who disavow religion often claim an absence of any sacred unifying force that has humanity's interests at heart? How will we do this when our best imaginative thinking is harnessed to an economy driven by avarice and confined to perpetuating the status quo while increasing the personal status of the creator? How will humanity unleash the original thought of the unknown and harness it to a desire to serve others, as opposed to oneself?

Initial Response

We must find a way forward that can unify all people in practice, at the same time it leaves each person free to work within their own context. And this way must be presented in a fashion

² James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Nourishing the Spirit: The Healing Emotions of Wonder, Joy, Compassion, and Hope* (Mary Knoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 155. At the conclusion of *Nourishing the Spirit* James and Evelyn Whitehead write, "Today the idolatry of reason associated with the Enlightenment is giving way to a richer appreciation of the remarkable range of human knowing—as well as its enduring limits. This shift opens the way to a renewed recognition of religious intuition and its contribution to human life. Religious appreciation thrives along the broad threshold where reason and emotion overlap, where consciousness contends with the unconscious, where metaphors flourish. In this rich soil, religious intuition and spiritual inspirations thrive."

that is available to all people without distinction.

The thesis proposes that the way forward is through the attentive, intentional discipline of contemplation, the practice of compassion, and the resulting creativity that naturally emerges from the alchemy of these two vital resources. It proposes that the purposeful praxis of these two disciplines can yield new ways of seeing, hearing and being that can help shift human consciousness, allowing for a new flowering of wisdom, discernment and original thought. The resulting flow of creativity would weave together divinity and humanity in a yet unimagined manner. To both model and encourage this new emerging, the thesis is offered through the reinvention of an ancient tradition in modern form – a digital anchorhold. This web presence has the advantage of disseminating its ideas to a wide audience in modern form at the same time it supports a new look at personal monastic possibilities.

Thesis Statement

This thesis will create a digital anchorhold in the form of a web presence offering a curated sample of innovative initiatives and original art forms emerging from, and in support of, a devotion to the discipline of contemplation and the intentional practice of compassion. It is undergirded by the belief that the creativity emerging from these two spiritual practices, working in concert with one another, can help guide humanity towards the transformation of consciousness necessary to understand itself as part of an intimately connected web of life embracing all sentient beings and all aspects of the natural world. The thesis has its genesis in the Christian tradition, but its offerings are not tethered to doctrine nor confined to any one faith or inclination.

Scope and Limitations of the Thesis

The thesis addresses challenges set within what is commonly known as the Western world, that is Europe and North America, though it may be that the solutions it offers will extend past these tidy geographical borders. The thesis draws largely on Protestant and Catholic scholarship and experience, though its focus on contemplation, compassion and creativity can be identified in all faith formations. In its examination of spiritual practices, the thesis embraces disciplines from a variety of spiritual traditions. The thesis draws theologically on the Christian faith, though it is not designed to be confined within the formal church but rather to address the struggles within modern culture. It is hoped that its creative offerings will travel past all these set boundaries, both intellectually and spiritually, and extend comfortably wherever people are desirous of moving toward healing the fractiousness and division in a world rich with beauty, abundance, and wonder.

Justification for the Project and the Writer's Assumptions that Inform the Work

The great work of our time lies in guiding humanity to a new understanding of itself as compassionate, generous and wise. All those who wish for peace in this world need to harness themselves to this endeavor and offer their best thought for mutual edification. This is my best thought, and I offer it as some small part of the great collective work.

These are the assumptions that inform my work.

We are all connected one to the other in an intimate web of relationships. We are all beloved equally. Being beloved is our essence. If we are living at this moment, we are in and of divine presence. Being beloved and being surrounded, embedded, and immersed in the divine has nothing to do with what we do, who we are in outward appearances, our morality, our

nature, our faith, or lack thereof. It is simply a fact of our being alive. Each breath is a divine breath, intermingled with all others, intermingled with the natural world, no matter where we live, who we live with, or where or how we worship or do not worship.

There is nothing we can do to live outside the milieu of the sacred because we are embedded within it. However, we can reject the knowings that it offers by denying its existence. Or we can encourage familiarity with it by making ourselves available to its teachings. The divine holds all wisdom, but we may intuit this wisdom when, in humility, we align ourselves with a desire for goodness, truth, and above all, love. It is God's job to do the miraculous, what we are not capable of doing. It is our job to live compassionately, one with the other, in deep respect and appreciation of all that has been given to us, and all that may still be offered.

The Canadian thinkers that have influenced my thought are: Jean Vanier, Douglas John Hall, David Suzuki, George Grant, Sallie McFague, Mary Jo Leddy and David Cayley. I am particularly drawn to the Christian theologians who suffered through the Holocaust and WWII, and yet discovered the deep desire for goodness in humanity: Jürgen Moltmann (Theology of Hope), Simone Weil, (faith is the intellect illuminated by love), Dorothee Soelle, (mysticism is resistance), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (mysticism as the path for third century Christianity), Emmanuel Levinas (theology of face), and Abraham Heschel, (Sabbath as a grounding principle). Also, of influence is the movement of deep ecology initiated by Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin and continued by Brian Swimme, Matthew Fox, and Diarmid O'Marchu.

Audience

The thesis is written for all those who have an inherent respect for the mystery they may or may not name as God, for those who desire peace and wellness for all other humans, and for

those who are working towards the healing of our ecology, our hearts, and our collective spirit. It may be of interest to those in positions of leadership looking for new ways to lead from a place of contemplation and compassion, and open to allowing original thought to emerge in service to the larger good.

Overview of Method and Approach

The method will be investigative, interpretive, informative, reflective and imaginative. The thesis will begin by exploring contemplation as it has been developed and is known in the Christian tradition. It will draw on the scholarship of contemplative practitioners Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*³ and *Contemplation in Action*;⁴ Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*⁵ and *The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See*;⁶ Thomas Keating, *Consenting to God as God Is*⁷ and *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation*;⁸ Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart*;⁹ Tilden Edwards, *Embracing the Call to Spiritual*

³ Thomas Merton and Sue Monk Kidd, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, rev. ed. (New York: New Directions, 2007).

⁴ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation in a World of Action*, rev. ed. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998).

⁵ Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*, rev. ed. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2003).

⁶ Richard Rohr, *The Naked Now: Learning To See As the Mystics See*, 1st ed. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2009).

⁷ Thomas Keating, *Consenting to God as God Is* (Brooklyn, New York: Lantern Books, 2016).

⁸ Thomas Keating, Ronald F. Thiemann, and Elaine Pagels, *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

⁹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming An Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

Depth: Gifts for Contemplative Living;¹⁰ and Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises*.¹¹ It will also access the wisdom of writers with contemplative pastoral gifts: Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*¹² and *The Beloved, Spiritual Living in a Secular World*;¹³ Wilkie Au and Noreen Cannon, *The Grateful Heart: Living the Christian Message*;¹⁴ Constance Fitzgerald, *Impasse and the Dark Night*;¹⁵ Mary Jo Leddy, *Radical Gratitude*;¹⁶ Margaret Silf, *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living*;¹⁷ and Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable, Contemplative Practices in the Black Church*.¹⁸ It will access the collected wisdom gained in this area by *Spiritual Directors International*.¹⁹ Spiritual directors do their work of deep listening in what is referred to as a ‘contemplative stance,’ and as part of their study have done numerous reflections on the process. It will be presented, however, not only in traditional prose, but through song, visuals, practical suggestions, and examples of gatherings and worship programs that reflect and interpret the basic teachings.

¹⁰ Tilden Edwards, *Embracing the Call to Spiritual Depth: Gifts for Contemplative Living* (New York: Paulist Press, 2010).

¹¹ Anthony Mottola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: Saint Ignatius’ Profound Precepts of Mystical Theology*, rev. ed. (Garden City, NY: Image, 1964).

¹² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Making All Things New: An Invitation to the Spiritual Life*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2009).

¹³ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*, 10th ed. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002).

¹⁴ Wilkie Au, *The Grateful Heart: Living the Christian Message* (New York: Paulist Pr, 2011).

¹⁵ Constance Fitzgerald, ‘Impasse and Dark Night’ in *Living With Apocalypse: Spiritual Resources for Social Compassion*, 1st ed., Tilden H. Edwards, ed., (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1984), 93 – 116.

¹⁶ Mary Jo Leddy, *Radical Gratitude* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 2014).

¹⁷ Margaret Silf, *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2005).

¹⁸ Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004).

¹⁹ Spiritual Directors International, (accessed April 18, 2018), <http://www.sdiworld.org/>.

The thesis will similarly investigate the work of intentional compassion. It will be drawing on the scholarship of Frank Rogers in his thesis work *Practicing Compassion*²⁰ and of Andrew Dreitcer, in his wonderful offering, *Living Compassion, Loving Like Jesus*.²¹ Both Rogers and Dreitcer, propose compassion as a stance of attentive investigation into our internal turmoil and a reaching out to that same internal turmoil within another. Here compassion is an activity, requiring the practicing of on-going spiritual disciplines and deep commitment. Other writers that inform the understanding of compassion are: Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*;²² Gerald May, *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit*;²³ and Alane Daugherty, *From Mindfulness to Heartfeltness: A Journey of Transformation through the Science of Embodiment*.²⁴

In the field of neuroscience, concerning both compassion and contemplation, the thesis will be relying on the scholarship of Rick Hanson, *wisebrain.org*; Mark Solms, *The Brain and the Inner World*;²⁵ Patrick McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*;²⁶ Daniel

²⁰ Frank Rodgers Jr, *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville, Tenn: Upper Room Books, 2014).

²¹ Andrew Dreitcer, *Living Compassion: Loving Like Jesus* (Nashville, Tenn: Upper Room Books, 2017).

²² Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*, (HarperCollins e-books, 2011).

²³ Gerald G. May, *Care of Mind/Care of Spirit: A Psychiatrist Explores Spiritual Direction*, rev.ed. (San Francisco: HarperOne, 1992).

²⁴ Alane Daugherty, *From Mindfulness to Heartfulness: A Journey of Transformation through the Science of Embodiment* (BalboaPress, 2014).

²⁵ Mark Solms, *The Brain and the Inner World: An Introduction to the Neuroscience of the Subjective Experience*, rev. ed. (New York: Other Press, 2003).

²⁶ Patrick McNamara, *The Neuroscience of Religious Experience*, rev. ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Goleman, *The Meditative Mind*;²⁷ Alan Wallace, *Mind in the Balance, Meditation in Science, Buddhism and Christianity*;²⁸ Daniel Siegel, *Mindsight*;²⁹ Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love*.³⁰

The third section, creativity, will offer a curated sample of creative thought and artistic endeavors originally my own. As the online presence develops, it will include artwork, photography, audio recordings, podcasts, essays, music, scholarly and creative writing of others, as well as internet links to other digital sites where appropriate.

The thesis is motivated by a hermeneutic of hunger, as articulated by Dorothee Soelle in her extrapolation of liberation theology. In her desire for meaningful, life changing theology, Soelle presents a hermeneutical approach that begins in praxis, moves to analysis, spends time in meditation, and returns to a renewed praxis.³¹ This approach mirrors the development behind the thesis. My praxis in rural ministry revealed the emerging of spiritual awakenings in

²⁷ Daniel Goleman, *The Meditative Mind: The Varieties of Meditative Experience*, 2nd ed. (New York: TarcherPerigee, 1996).

²⁸ Alan Wallace, *Mind in the Balance: Meditation in Science, Buddhism, and Christianity*, 1st ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

²⁹ Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*, (New York: Bantam, 2010).

³⁰ Arthur Zajonc, *Meditation as Contemplative Inquiry: When Knowing Becomes Love* (Great Barrington, Mass: Lindisfarne Pr, 2008).

³¹ Dorothee Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, trans. Barbara Rumscheidt and Martin Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 59. Soelle speaks to the emptiness that has left individuals in the Western world largely adrift, and yet, like famished children, searching for the spiritual bread that will sustain them. “This search for the edible bread of mysticism is not spurred on by dabbling, sniffing now at this and now at that religious tradition. Rather, that search grows with every new defeat of God, with every further destruction of the earth and its inhabitants. It learns to listen to the ‘silent cry.’” Soelle imagines this ‘silent cry’ to be filled with the unheard voices of others, unimagined possibilities, and the divine murmurings of the spirit; Dorothee Soelle, *On Earth as in Heaven, On Earth as in Heaven: A Liberating Spirituality of Sharing*, trans. Marc Batko (Westminster: London, 1993), ix-xi. Here Soelle articulates her hermeneutic method step by step in the introductory section, laying out in simple language how she arrives at her considered thought.

surprising places, despite the obvious despair, confusion and violence in people's lives. This led me to further study in the field of spirituality, particularly in the training of spiritual direction. The combination of analysis and meditation, or what I would term the practice of contemplative stance, has brought me back to creative endeavors, the outpouring of the internal contemplative practices married to the ongoing practice of compassion in my work as a spiritual leader.

Definition of Important Terms

Digital Anchorhold: A traditional anchorhold was a cell-like building, usually attached to a church, where an anchoress/anchorite would retire from society to live a solitary life of intense prayer and spiritual practice. From this concentrated effort, she served humanity as spiritual guide. This early form of monasticism was widespread in Europe from the 12th to 16th century. From the anchorhold there were three windows: one into the church, with its connection to the priest and communion; one for an attendant, to serve the needs of the anchorite; and one to the outside world, where the anchorite would serve the public. The anchorite's spiritual work is always in service to others. A digital anchorhold is my own creation. It is a virtual cell anyone may enter from their own personal space on planet earth. The content of the web presence, orchestrated by myself, represents the base of knowledge and offerings of the church/scholarly world/priest. The links and interactions from other practitioners serves as the attendant's window, offering support and encouragement. The work emerging from those engaging with the website, in their own cells/studios/offices, will then go out into the world to serve the public at large through the third window, opening in to the street/culture/context, which is uniquely their own.

Contemplation: In the context of this thesis contemplation refers to a form of devotional stillness that reveals, clarifies and makes manifest the nature of reality. It should be noted that the

understandings given are just that, given. Contemplation is the act of opening one's self to the possible receiving of understandings that cannot be gained by normal human efforts.

Compassion: Compassion is the active regarding of life through the eyes of love, seeing value in all people and situations. This committed work of mind and heart restores one's own equilibrium and sense of belovedness, allowing for ourselves, and all others, to be known as valued members of humanity. True compassion offers a spirit of engagement beyond the human connection to all matters, natural and otherwise.

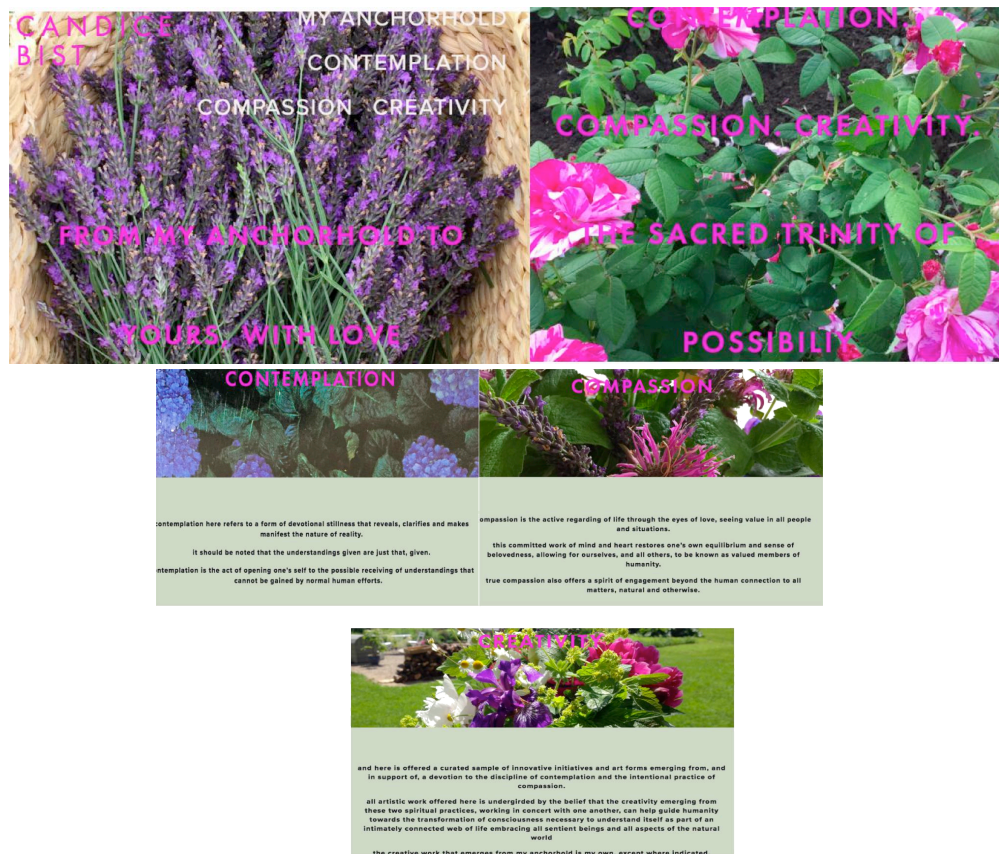
Spiritual Discipline: A spiritual discipline is any concerted effort, habit or practice which leads to an opening of spaciousness in which something unexpected may happen.

Presentation of Thesis

The thesis is offered not in the form of a static paper, but in the livelier arena of a digital anchorhold. You will find it at <http://myanchorhold.com>³² Here follows a glimpse of what you can expect in various sections. Note that at the time of delivering this thesis, the screen shots shown below form the core of the website. But as the website is a living, ongoing presence, though it will continue to contain these basic elements, it will grow and expand as it must.

Overview

The homepage scrolls down to offer an understanding of an anchorhold, and the three components of the thesis that will be offered.



³² Candice Bist, “Candice’s Anchorhold,” Candice Bist, accessed March 26, 2018, <http://myanchorhold.com/>.

The Anchorage

Here is the introduction to the idea of an anchorhold. The entire page is quite long, but broken down into click away pages.³³



Traditional Anchorhold

It begins by establishing the nature of the traditional physical anchorhold.³⁴

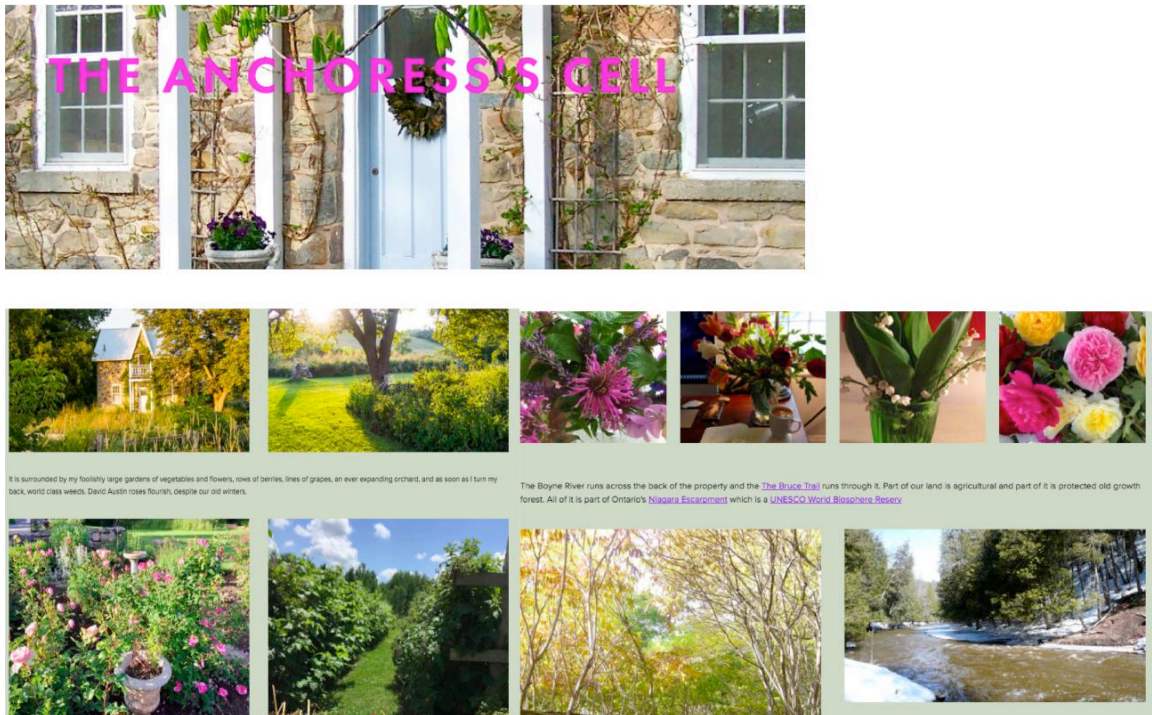


³³ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/my-cell/>.

³⁴ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/traditional-anchorhold/>.

The anchoress' Cell

The next section offers a description, for context, of the place of the physical anchorhold where I live.³⁵

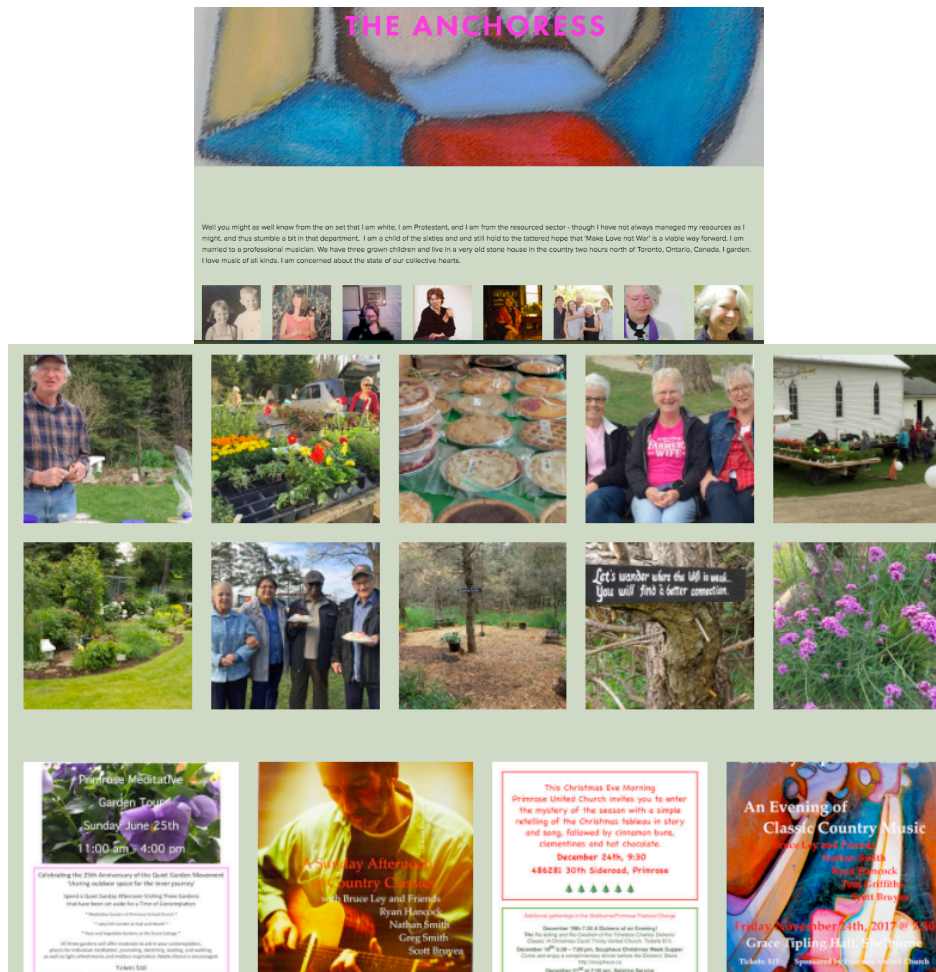


The anchoress

This is a page on myself, the anchoress, personally. It includes something of my education, inclinations, and where I work. It is mostly pictorial, with brief comments.³⁶

³⁵ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/the-anchoresss-cell/>.

³⁶ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/the-anchoress>.



Anchorhold Window One

The idea of the three windows in a traditional anchorhold are explained. The modern interpretation of the first window is revealed. In a traditional anchorhold, the first window opened in to the church where the anchoress could connect to the church who was her host, to her divine connection found in communion, and to the priest who could offer advice and prayerful support. In the modern digital version of window one, the virtual window is connected to the educational, spiritual, and religious entities that have supported me in the past and continue to offer sustenance both physically and digitally.³⁷

³⁷ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/window-one/>.



CLAREMONT THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

[The hybrid DMin program](#) I am just completing at Claremont is a joy and a delight. It is intellectually challenging, but so full of grace one dares to dream. And yes, we are trying to change the world. Because we can. And we will. And we do.

"Claremont School of Theology students range in age from 20 to 86, 60 percent are students of color and international students, almost half are women. We are LGBTQIA-friendly, representing more than 40 denominations and traditions. We are seeking friends and allies in working together to create a difference for the world we live in, now!"

TORONTO SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Anchorhold Window Two

In a traditional anchorhold the second opening was for the person who cared for the anchoress in her personal needs. In my modern version, I consider that I am cared for by the real people that have been my benefactors throughout my life, by the theologians, writers and spiritual teachers who have guided me, and by all the writers that support both myself and this thesis in bibliographical form.³⁸

³⁸ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/window-two/>.

ANCHORHOLD WINDOW

TWO

every anchoress has benefactors, those who have cared for her throughout her lifetime, who have brought her to the place where she may assume the mantle of anchoress.

Jay MacIntyre's book, *Awakening to Love, Unveiling your Deepest Good*, draws our attention, and gratitude, to those who have brought us to our current place in the world. In his 'Learning to Recognize Benefactors' exercise, I brought to mind the many people who have gifted me with their love, attention and instruction over the years. I was swamped with an endless parade of characters, some known to me, and some not. I rather felt like being part of that old Christmas Coca Cola television commercial that begins with the face of one child in full frame and then pulls back to reveal two children, then pulls back to reveal four more, then eight more and so on until there is an enormous Christmas tree of faces, the first child seemingly supported by all the others. While doing this meditation/practice this is the image that came to mind. When you look at me there is one face looking back. But trailing behind me are the millions of connecting people who have made my current existence possible. MacIntyre comments that "very few of us would have survived our childhood had it not been for the countless, now mostly forgotten, acts of loving kindness extended to us." (*Awakening Through Love*, 18).

Here are just a few of the many who hold me in love, either by their own personal love for me, or for the fact that they have extended their love to serve humanity, and I am by virtue of being alive. In their embrace: My husband Bruce, and children Michael, Christopher and Mapleline; my parents George and Ruth; Martin Luther King and all those who have given their lives to uplift the lives of others; all the women who come to my home and into my life to serve the larger good; Albert Schweitzer, whom I have had a crush on since I was six and who shares by birthday; two of the many girlfriends without whom I am a lost creature, Leika and Ann; so many elders throughout my life: the gracious Little Flower; my beloved grandmother Jane Jordine; Rabbi Abraham Heschel who taught me about Sabbath and beauty in faith; Jesus' presence; my ultimate Beloved; my personal Saint Simon; George Grant, a man of deep integrity; all the musicians, singers and performers who have supported my work; new girlfriends - can you have too many?; my beau-pere's Anthony and Esther Dwyer; Underhill, the consummate spiritual director; churches, especially the rural ones; choirs offering celebration and joy; Gandhi, with whom I share the battle of the tents and the search after truth. Benefactors all. And I, the fortunate recipient of their love and gift.

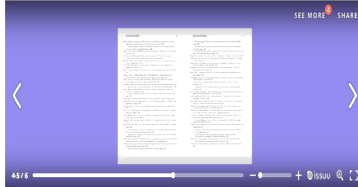


WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR THE THOUGHT BEHIND

'CONTEMPLATION. COMPASSION. CREATIVITY.

THE SACRED TRINITY OF POSSIBILITY.'

SEE MORE SHARE



I am also drawn to the theologians from the Jewish and Christian tradition who suffered through the Holocaust and WW2 and yet discovered the deep desire for goodness in humanity.

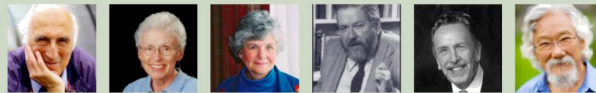


Here will be a small of theologians that can be seen with quotes from their thinking.

and also of influence is the movement of deep ecology initiated by Thomas Berry and Teilhard de Chardin and continued on by Brianne Swimme, Wendell Berry, Matthew Fox, Diarmuid O'Murchu and others.



SIX CANADIAN THINKERS WHO HAVE INFLUENCED ME



"To reveal someone's beauty is to reveal their value by giving them time, attention, and tenderness. To love is not just to do something for them but to reveal to them their own uniqueness, to tell them that they are special and worthy of attention."

— Jean Vanier, *Becoming Human*

Anchorhold Window Three

The third window in a traditional anchorhold opened onto the street so the anchoress could offer her spiritual gifts to those who desired it. And so here, we come at last, to the core of the thesis, offered out through the third window of the modern anchorhold into the digital world for all passersby.³⁹

³⁹ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/contemplation-compassion-creativity-the-sacred-trinity-of-possibility-2/>.



i propose that the way forward is through the attentive, intentional discipline of contemplation, the practice of compassion, and the resulting creativity that naturally emerges from the alchemy of these two vital resources.

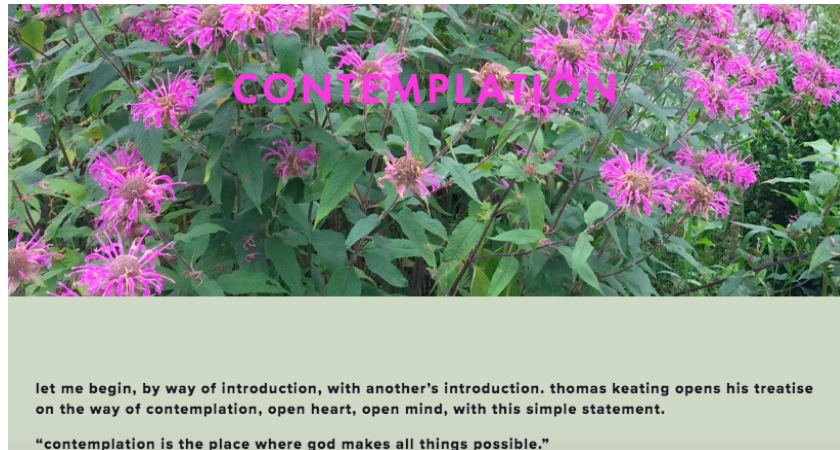
i propose that the purposeful praxis of these two disciplines can yield new ways of seeing, hearing and being that can help shift human consciousness, allowing for a new flowering of wisdom, discernment and original thought.

the resulting flow of creativity would weave together divinity and humanity in a yet unimagined manner

Contemplation

Overview

The opening page begins with a simple piece of original thought on the essence of contemplation inspired by Thomas Keating's classic work, *Open Heart, Open Mind*.⁴⁰

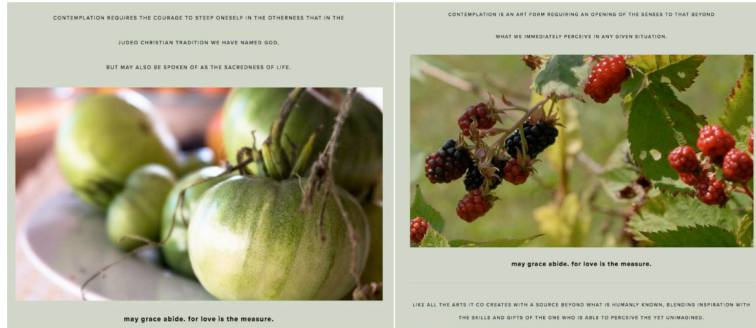


Creative Meditation

The overview is followed by a 'Meditation on Contemplation'. It consists of an original painting, an original piece of writing, and original photographs. It is recorded with voice and piano. I include two screen shots of this section. The original piece of writing is inspired by the first two chapters in *Seeds of Contemplation* another classic work in this field by Thomas Merton.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/contemplation-1/>; Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*, 20th ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006).

⁴¹ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/contemplativerosary/>; Merton and Kidd, *New Seeds of Contemplation*.




Two Other Meditations


This is followed by two other meditations and a song to encourage contemplation. These two meditations open into their own pages.⁴²

two meditations for spiritual practice

Here are two further meditations in the form of rosaries, though you need not work with a rosary to benefit from their beauty. The breath and prayer meditation uses the breath to slow our pace and draw us to a place of contemplation. It is offered in written and audio form. The 'be still and know' meditation, is a singing meditation, drawing on Christian scripture for its motif.



[Breath and Prayer Meditation](#)



[Be Still and Know Meditation](#)

▶

I The Lord of Sea and Sky

Music: D. Schutte/C.Bist/Lyrics: Dan Schutte/Artist:C.Bist

Three Sample Contemplative Projects

There follows three samples of projects initiated and designed with the goal of encouraging contemplation in three different contexts, for three groups of people.

⁴² Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/breathandprayer/>; Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/bestillandknow/>.

three projects initiated and designed with the goal of contemplation in mind.

Each of these projects was designed for a different group of people with different needs. They offered finite experiences as a bridge to the infinite sacred. It is hoped they provided a place of expansiveness, that we might experience our sacred, collective unity.



[Primrose Meditative Garden Tour](#)



[Northern Waters Presbytery Retreat](#)



[Good Friday Contemplative Service](#)

The Meditation Garden Tour

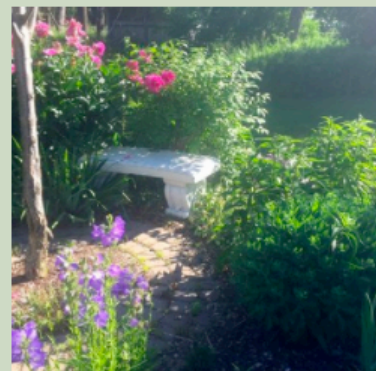
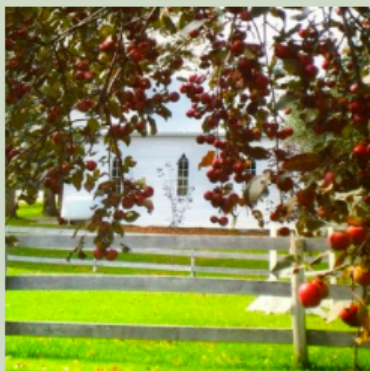
The community was invited to three places of beauty set aside for a Sunday afternoon of contemplation. Silence was encouraged. Cards with various quotes on silence and contemplation were available for focus. Beautifully laid out refreshments – without conversation – were provided.⁴³

THE PRIMROSE MEDITATION GARDEN IS NOW OFFICIALLY PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION: THE QUIET GARDEN MOVEMENT. [HTTP://QUIETGARDEN.ORG/](http://quietgarden.org/)

"The primary vision of The Quiet Garden Trust is to initiate and resource a network of local opportunities for prayer, silence, reflection and the appreciation of beauty; for learning about Christian life and spirituality; for experiencing creativity and healing in the context of God's love." It is the hope and prayer of Primrose United Church that the Primrose Meditation Garden will be well used as a place of beauty and quiet, a loving contribution to this world wide movement. We are deeply grateful to all those who have put the Trust in place and delighted to be part of this ongoing Christian enterprise to provide prayer space to all people of all faiths and inclinations - so exciting for our little church and garden to be part of this amazing international movement.

Have a peek: <http://quietgarden.org/gardens/primrose-meditation-garden/>

Rev. Candice Bist



⁴³ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/primrose-meditative-garden-tour/>.

Northern Waters Presbytery Retreat

This contemplative retreat was designed for a group of United Church of Canada ministers. A day was set aside at a country retreat to reflect on six possible spiritual disciplines that might guide them in the practice of contemplation. Periods of silence were maintained between the teaching. Hospitality was provided for their ease. One of the writings that is offered as a meditation in preparation for the retreat, is a core teaching on the importance of understanding spiritual disciplines as practices that create the spaciousness that encourages divine encounters.⁴⁴



The Good Friday Service

This sacred service was created for those who desired to honour the highest of holidays in the Christian calendar in a thoughtful, reflective manner. An original choir piece was composed for this gathering that reflected the importance of finding the quiet centre within.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/nwp-retreat/>.

⁴⁵ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/good-friday-contemplative-service/>.



"At some thoughts a man stands perplexed, above all at the sight of human sin, and he wonders whether to combat it by force or by humble love. Always decide: I will combat it by humble love. If you resolve on that once and for all, you can conquer the whole world. Loving humility is a terrible force: it is the strongest of all things, and there is nothing else like it."

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, through his Christ like character Stavrosgin

introduction to the contemplative listening of the passion story

Spiritual directors are trained to work with people as a kind of spiritual buddy to help them recognize the divine in their lives - and one of the tools that is used to train a person for this work is called a verbatim. And it is both very simple, and quite miraculous. You begin by listening to someone for an hour, straining to hear the presence of God in the person's life. It is very concentrated work. Then afterwards you sit quietly, in an attitude of prayer and contemplation, and you bring to mind some small part of the conversation.

You cannot take notes during the hour of listening. And as you have to stay perfectly present in the moment to hear the movements of the spirit, you cannot waste energy trying to remember things as they happened. So the sitting and bringing to mind what happened has no conscious memory to it.

Then you write verbatim what you said and what the other person said around a particular subject or word or idea that comes to your mind.

If one were to tape the session, it would not be what you remember and write down.

But the strange thing is, it does not seem to matter.

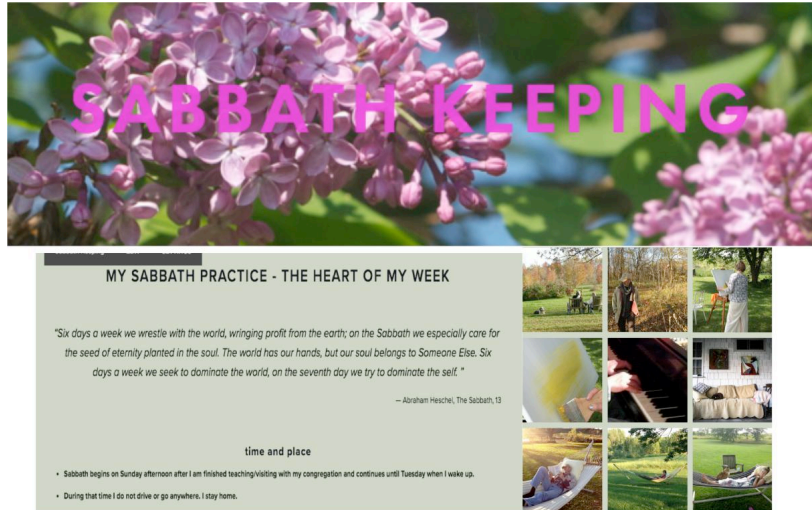
Spiritual Practices from the Judeo-Christian Tradition

Creative contemplative knowledge is a gift. It cannot be obtained, only granted. However, effort extended to find ways to open the spirit to its reception are essential. Offered here are a selection of disciplines to aid in this adventure. The purpose of all spiritual disciplines is to create a place of spaciousness wherein new intuitions can emerge. In fact, any activity or thought process may be a spiritual discipline if the intention is laid down in the doing. But for my purposes here, these are traditional spiritual practices from the store house of the Christian tradition.

Sabbath Keeping

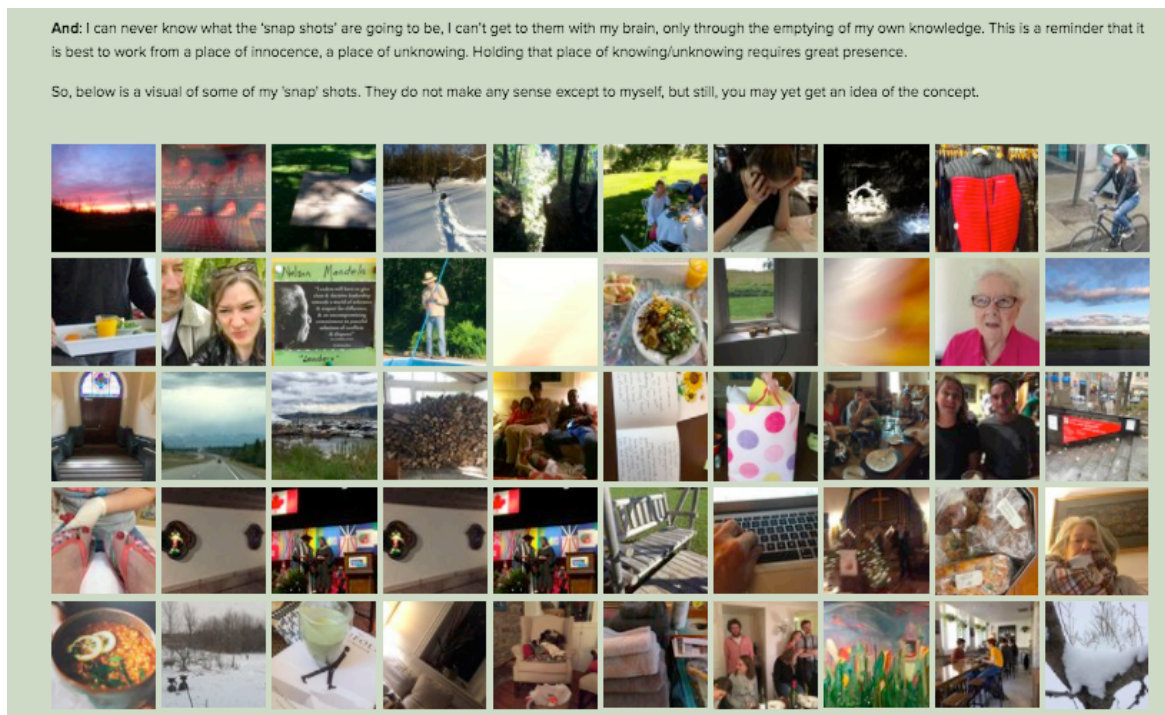
This is my personal practice, with details of how I have delineat my Sabbath time in terms of activities, time, and space. My practices are based on the work of Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath*, and Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance, Saying No in the Culture of Now*.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/spiritualrenewal/>; Abraham Joshua Heschel and Susannah Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005); Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No in the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: WJK BOOKS, 2016).



The Examen

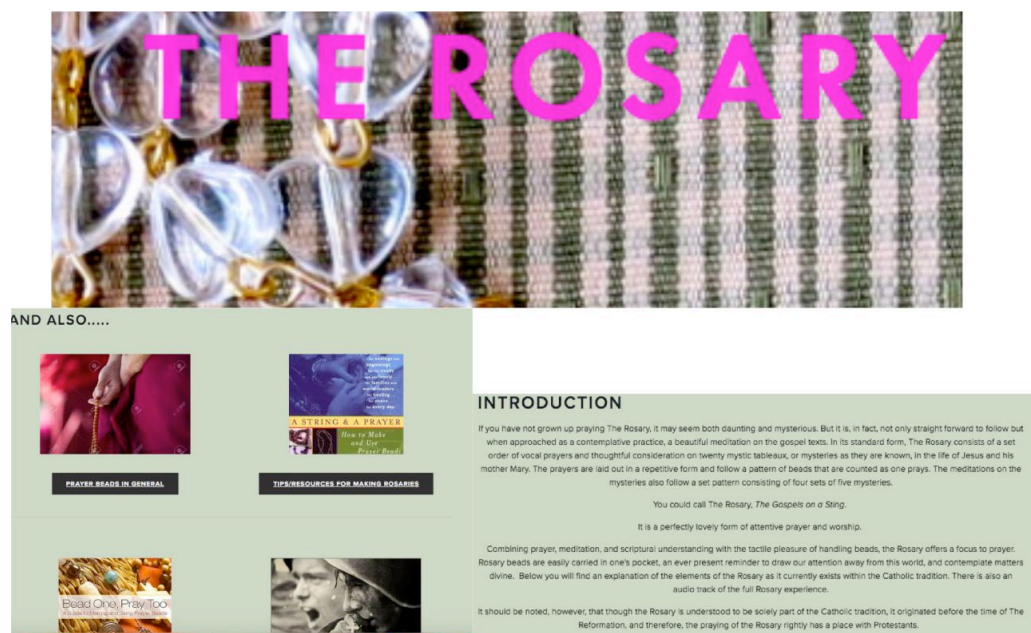
This daily practice of self-examination comes from the Ignatian tradition. Here is an explanation of the discipline as well as a visual wall of images gathered over months of practice.⁴⁷



⁴⁷ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/my-examen/>.

The Rosary

This is a look at the traditional use of prayer beads as they are used in The Rosary in the Catholic tradition. In addition, these other areas are examined: the Anglican rosary, The Protestant rosary, the making of personal rosaries, the history of prayer beads and the guide they may be in contemplative practice.⁴⁸



Spiritual Disciplines from Other Faith Traditions

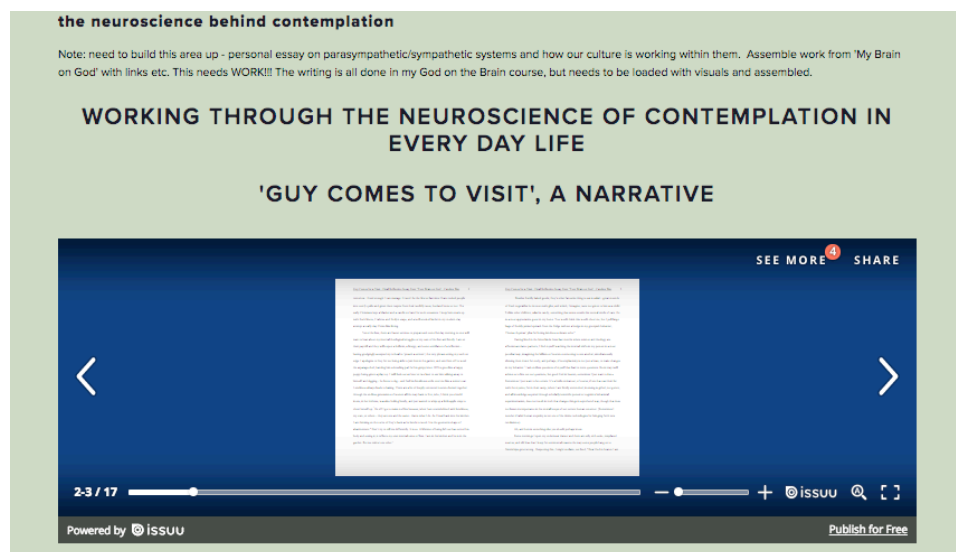
I am currently working on this section as I take the course on Multi-Faith Spiritual Traditions at Claremont School of Theology. I will be reporting on the practicing of specific practices from various faith traditions through the lens of a Christian person trying them out. My main project is the practicing of the five pillars of the Muslim faith throughout the Christian

⁴⁸ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/therosary/>.

Lenten season. I am working with Imam Omar Subedar, a Muslim scholar and theologian and his book *The First Steps in Practicing Islam*.⁴⁹

The Neuroscience Behind Contemplation

This section is yet to be fully established. For now it includes an original narrative, “Guy Comes to Visit”, that works through of the principles of the neuroscience of contemplation in story form, with full bibliography.



Contemplative Stance

I have included a lengthy scholarly paper on contemplative stance from my ThM degree. It provides detailed background material on the art of contemplation as well as an outline of four ministries that have emerged from contemplation and are compassionate and creative in nature.

⁴⁹ Omar Subedar, *The First Steps in Practicing Islam* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

here is a previous scholarly work on 'contemplative stance' that will offer a deeper investigation into many of the concepts explored above.

'CONTEMPLATIVE STANCE: DISCERNING THE WAY FORWARD AS HUMANITY TRANSITIONS FROM A DOMINATION PARADIGM TO A COMMUNION PARADIGM AS ARTICULATED BY BEATRICE BRUTEAU



Compassion

Overview

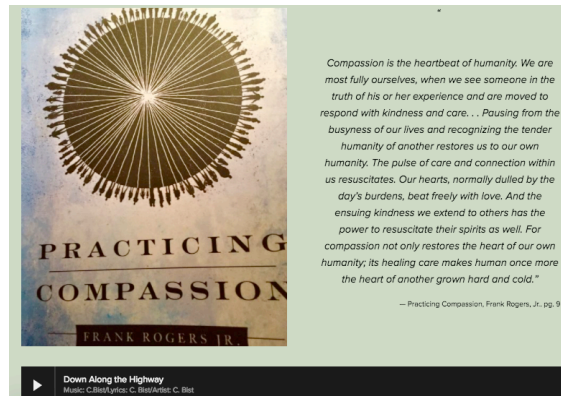
This section begins with a definition of what compassion looks like in the context of this thesis/anchorhold. A core element is that it is not a passive endeavor, but an active engagement with one's self, the other and the world at large.⁵⁰



Practicing Compassion, Frank Rogers

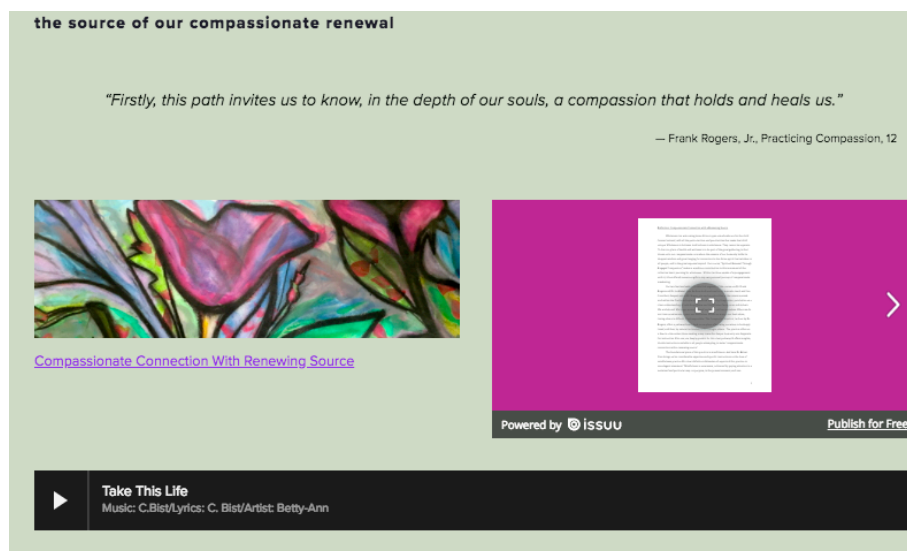
The work in this section has its genesis with Frank Rogers' call to compassion in his seminal work, *Practicing Compassion*. This section explores the thought that Rogers lays before us as we work at restoring our own humanity while we restore the spirits of others. Each one contains a visual element, a reflection, and a song.

⁵⁰ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/compassion-3/>.



The Source of our Compassionate Renewal

This section contains a personal reflection on sources that sustain me, a song and a visual look at places that offer support.⁵¹

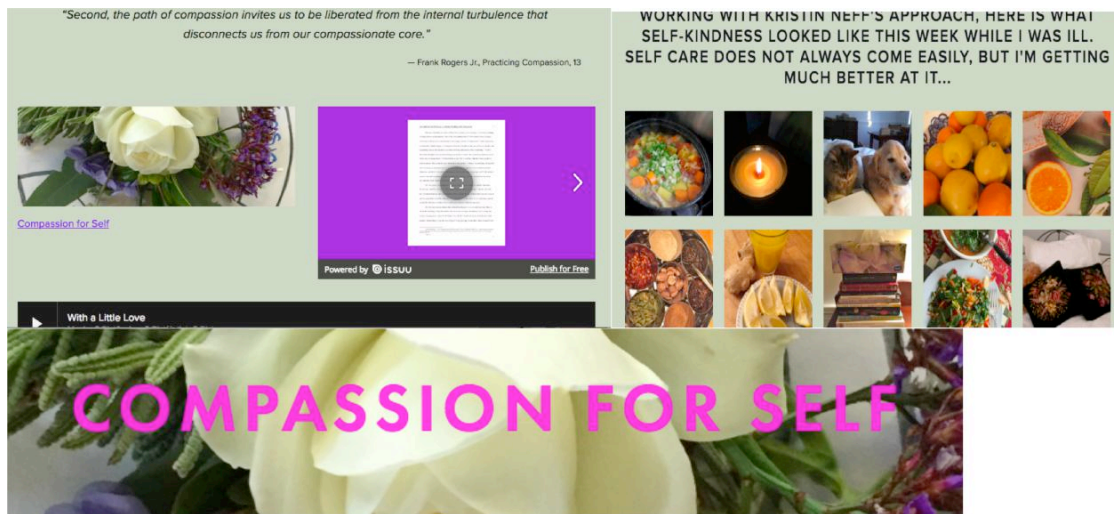


Compassion for Self

The same pattern occurs with visuals, a reflection, and song, this time with the focus on compassion for the self.⁵²

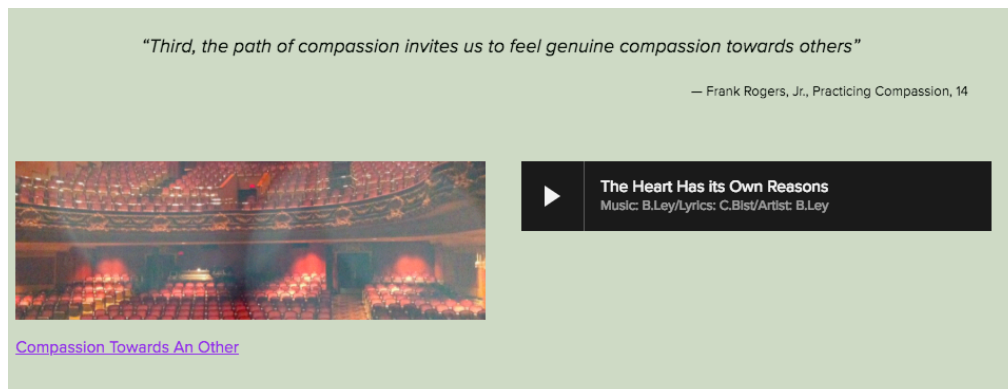
⁵¹ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/renewingsource/>.

⁵² Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/compassionforself/>.



Compassion for Another

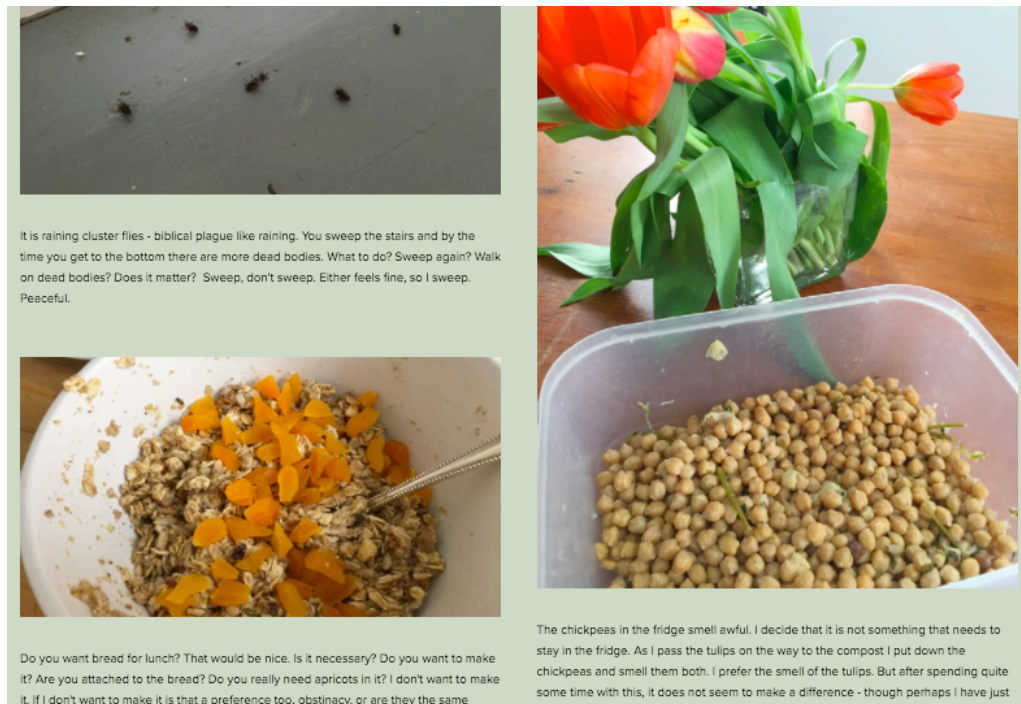
A brief reflection, short video, and song to encourage the reaching out to others with compassion.



Detachment as a Foundation for Compassionate Practice

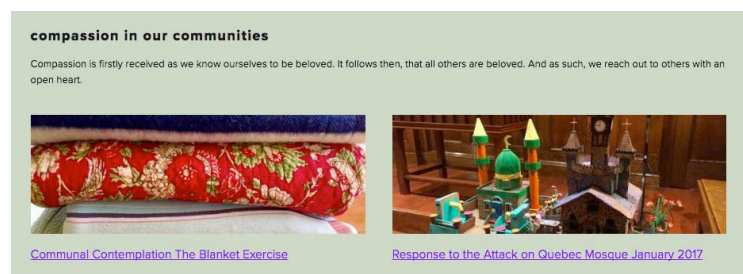
Meister Eckhart devoted much of his teaching to the importance of what he called ‘detachment’, the cleaving to things, people, patterns, or emotions that stood in the way of the spaciousness that was necessary to draw close to our divine source, and thus practice the

principles of active compassion. Here is a sample of practical theology and two songs reflecting his teaching.⁵³



Compassion Extending Out in to the Community

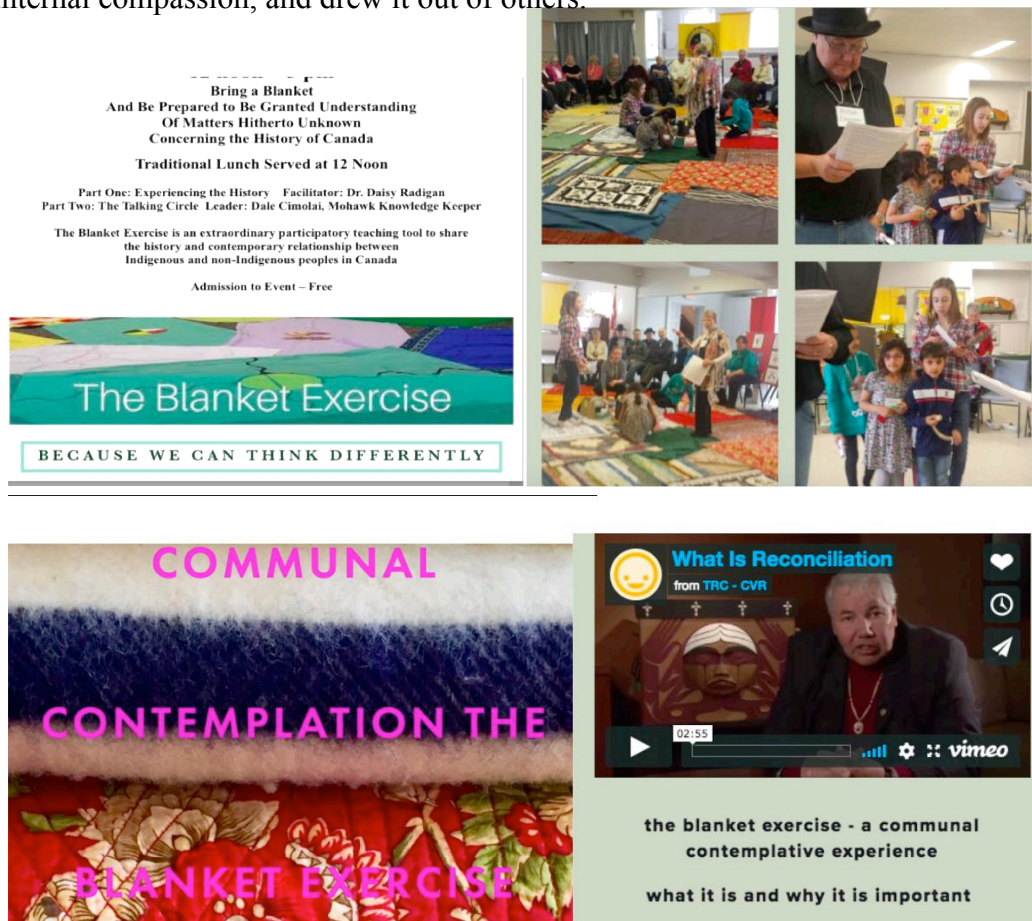
Compassion is first received as we know ourselves to be beloved. It follows then, that all others are beloved. Knowing this it is only natural that we would reach out to extend kindness and compassion to those in our communities who are under duress. Here are two samples of compassionate community outreach. They were both conceived in places of contemplation, and offered contemplative stance as a way of healing.



⁵³ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/meistereckhart/>.

Communal Contemplation and Compassion, The Blanket Exercise

This experiential history of the indigenous people of Canada emerged in response to a report from the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal People suggesting that the true history of our country was unknown to most Canadians, and thus the important place of our indigenous people, who have suffered greatly, was unknown. The gathering demanded contemplation, drew on our internal compassion, and drew it out of others.⁵⁴



Vigil in Response to Attack on Quebec Mosque

In response to the violence perpetrated in Quebec last year, one of the churches where I serve offered to hold a vigil. It turned out to be so much more than that, with many of our

⁵⁴ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/the-blanket-exercise/>.

Muslim friends joining us in spirit, song and prayer for an unforgettable evening marked by warmth and new friendships which have sustained and grown.⁵⁵

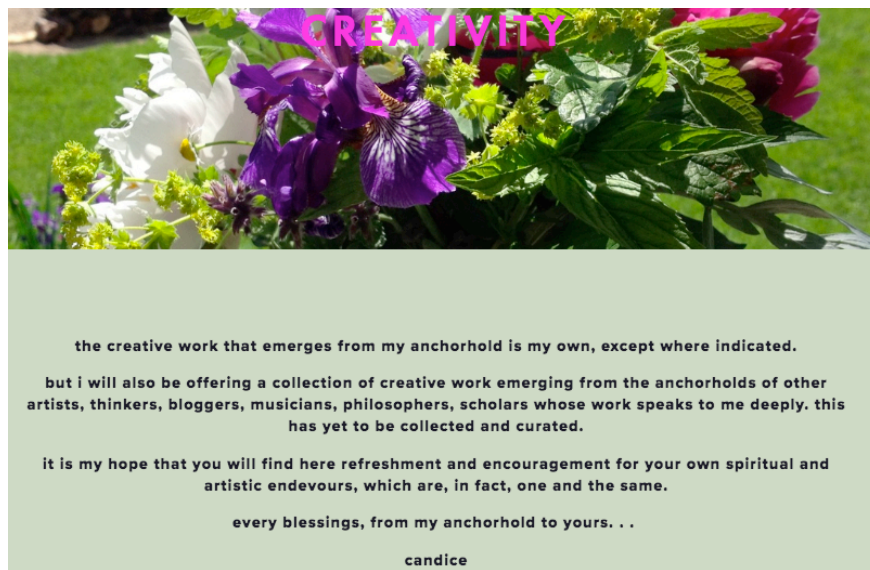


⁵⁵ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/response-to-the-attack-on-quebec-mosque/>.

Creativity

Overview

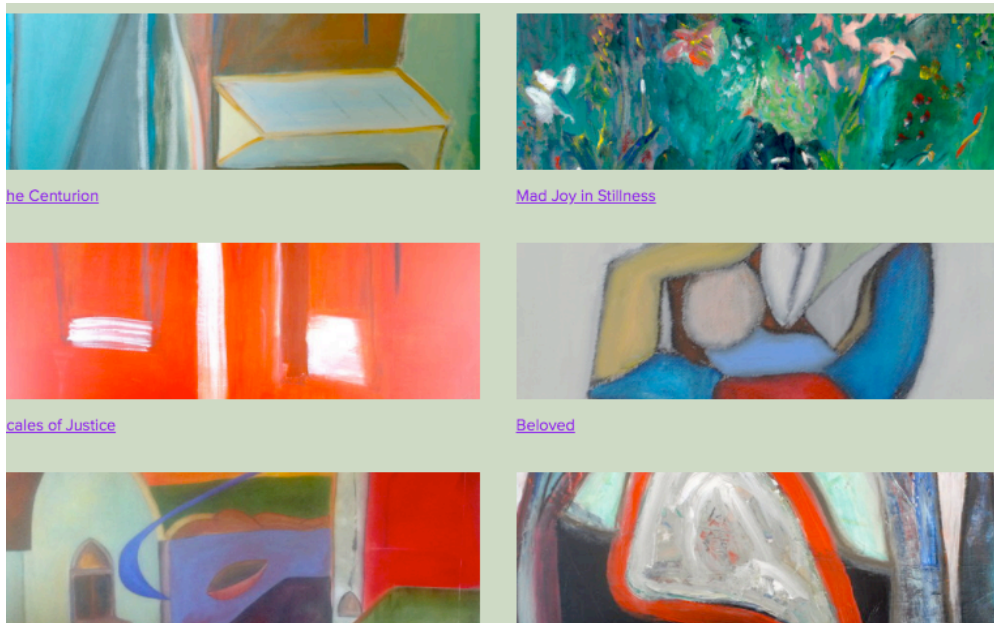
This last section offers five creative outpourings from my own work. This is only to begin. The anchorhold is not meant to be a showcase for my work, but a window where work that has been conceived in contemplation and illuminated by compassion may be offered. As this is my DMin project, I offer samples from my own work. But when the website is released into the world, it will be, over time, a curated source of connecting and renewing sources embracing a wide variety of disciplines. But for now, here is what I offer.



Improbable Conversations

This is a collection of ten poetic conversations between the viewer, the canvas, the artist, and the divine, as well as an opening reflection on the ongoing alchemy between them all.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/improbable-conversations/>.



Christian Spirituality

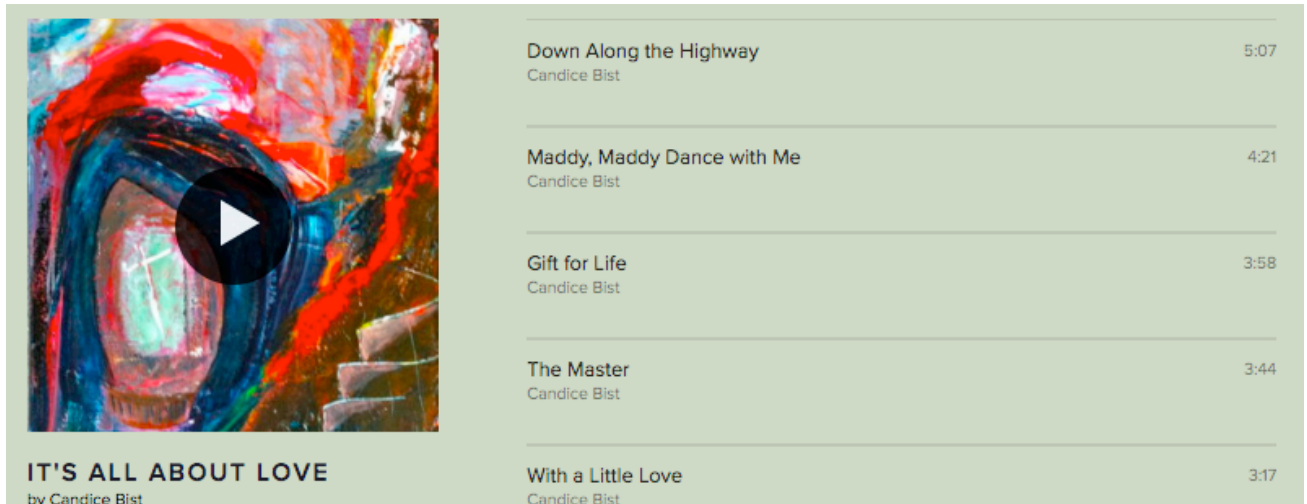
Here are six reflections on various spiritualities and teachers through painting, poem and song. The section includes: Celtic spirituality, Hildegard of Bingen, Hadewijch and love mysticism, Julian of Norwich, Jarena Lee, and spiritualities in the margins.⁵⁷



⁵⁷ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/christian-spiritulaity/>.

It's All About Love, CD

This is a musical offering emerging from my contemplative work, and offering bread for the journey, one hopes.⁵⁸



The Valley of the Shadow of Death

This is a short film reflecting the beauty and heartbreak of the death of a young person seen through the eyes of a faith filled mother. I wrote it, directed it, produced it and played one of the two main roles in it. It has never been shown before publically.⁵⁹

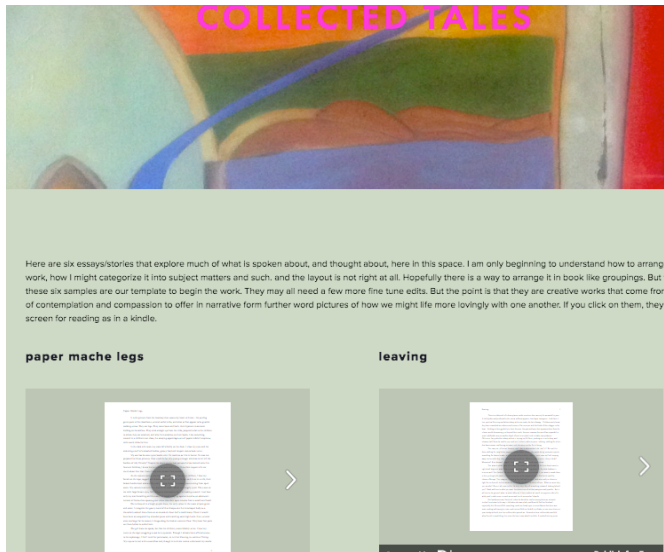


⁵⁸ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/its-all-about-love-1/>.

⁵⁹ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/death-and-dying/>.

Collected Tales

These are six tales that speak from a voice steeped in contemplation and enlivened with compassion.⁶⁰



⁶⁰ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/collected-tales/>.

Conclusion

Though this physical paper must conclude, the digital anchorhold that it points to has only just begun. The web presence that has been created to offer this work into the world will be ongoing.⁶¹ Certainly, it will continue to be a venue for my own theological creative work, offering its original gifts to digital passersby. But it will also expand to link to the work of other scholars, artists, theologians, philosophers, social and environmental activists - to all those whose work is undergirded with the principles laid out in this thesis.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight three additional intentions for the website, and work contained in it, after its launch this spring. Firstly, I will be bringing the work to a creative company DotDotDash.⁶² This remarkable agency, based in Toronto, Canada, offers their stellar services to those companies and people they deem to be doing good in this world. I am hoping they will see fit to guide me in how to bring the full digital power of the Internet to the website. If the work is to disseminate into the world as I am hoping, it will need further technical and creative assistance.

Secondly, I am compiling a list of all educational institutions, seminaries, retreat centers, religious/spiritual centers and creative enterprises, both in the physical and digital world, who might wish to connect with the work in my anchorhold. As I continue to work on loading more material and working to solidify the website's technical platform, I will be seeking venues for sharing this work with others. This is an exciting part of the work – watching how the interconnectedness spoken about in the thesis will expand from this finite paper to the infinite expanse outside it.

⁶¹ Bist, <http://myanchorhold.com/>.

⁶² “Home Page,” DOT DOT DASH, accessed March 26, 2018, <http://www.dotdotdash.ca>.

And thirdly, I will be seeking funding for My Anchorhold Project, MAP. This project would involve building three test anchorholds – one in the country, one in a prominent building in the city – an art gallery perhaps – and one in a church tower in a small town. They would not only need to be built, but appointed with all the amenities one would need to live in solitude. The choosing and training of a caretaker for each one would need to be put in place. On completion, a select group of people known for their compassionate engagement with this world would be offered a brief stay within one of the anchorholds. Here they could rest and contemplate in complete, undisturbed silence. On re-entering the world, they would be asked to offer some wisdom that emerged from their respite – a song, a story, a sentence, a melody, an essay, a project – something creative that emerged from their time of contemplation.

These offerings would be collected into a body of work to once again be gifted into the world for further consideration – disseminated through the digital anchorhold. This would begin, one would hope, the establishing of buildings set aside all over the world for taking time away from the world in contemplation, to then compassionately and creatively offer back new thought in a variety of fields that might serve us all as we move towards a new understanding of humanity as a web of interconnectivity.

May grace abide with us all, as we move towards a deeper wisdom and more grace filled humanity.

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